SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL
Kia Reretahi Tātau

30th September 2026

[redacted]

Kia ora [redacted]

Official information Request: Approved SW Wastewater Upgrades

I am writing to you in response to your request received 11 September for information relating wastewater treatment plant upgrades being conducted by SWDC.

We have assessed your request under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA). I have received information to provide the following response to your specific questions:

- Clarification requested:
  1. When will the upgrade to the Featherston Waste Water begin?
     The detailed design work began in August 2026 with physical works currently scheduled to begin in February 2027.

  2. What is the final cost of the three Wastewater upgrades?

     As the project is not completed, we cannot provide the final costings for the three wastewater treatment plant upgrades.

  3. What is the final cost of the Featherston Wastewater upgrades? **(Clarification received 24/09/26: I would like to have all the tender costs agreed too, we as rate payers are going to have, surely when the tenders and quotes were accepted they were the final costs approved?)**

     Refer below to the Featherston Wastewater Treatment Plant project that informed the LTP 2025/34, which is the approved budget. Note that costs over the duration of a project are subject to change as they are not fixed price contracts. In addition, we note that from 1 July 2027 this project will be transferred to Waitī Waters Limited.

Featherston Wastewater Treatment Plant

Project name	Total budget (exc GST)	SWDC 2024/25	SWDC 2025/26	SWDC 2026/27	Waitī Waters* 2027/28	Waitī Waters* 2028/29	Waitī Waters* 2029/30
FSTN WWTP Consent renewal & upgrades	$ 1,472,612	$ 1,208,612	$ 264,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FSTN WWTP Long-term consent stage 2 & major plant upgrade	$ 26,192,738	$ -	$ -	$ 616,704	$ 1,660,216	$ 10,492,144	$ 13,423,674
Total Capital Budget	$ 27,665,350	$ 1,208,612	$ 264,000	$ 616,704	$ 1,660,216	$ 10,492,144	$ 13,423,674

* Once waters services transition to Waitī Waters they will determine the infrastructure programme and charging policies.

This budget includes the contract works awarded for:	Total contract value
Construction	$ 3,273,118
Project management & technical advice	$ 131,250
	$ 3,404,368

Identifiable contractor/consultant costs for tender & advertising	Total cost (exc GST)
GHD	$ 6,836
Total procurement costs	$ 6,836

4. Will the costs only affect the Featherston urban ratepayers or will they be spread across the ward?
   Under the Council's current policies, the cost of building wastewater infrastructure is generally funded through borrowing. Rates are then used to cover the ongoing costs of that investment, such as loan interest, maintenance and depreciation, rather than funding the full construction cost upfront. This means that the infrastructure costs are paid by multiple generations who will benefit from it.
   Wastewater rates are not paid by all ratepayers, only by properties that are connected to, or have the ability to connect to, the wastewater network. We do not split these down geographically. This means the costs are shared across wastewater ratepayers throughout the district, rather than being charged only to Featherston urban ratepayers.
   From 1 July 2027, responsibility for wastewater services will transfer to Waitī Waters. At that point, Waitī Waters will determine how wastewater costs are charged and recovered, including the costs of treatment plants and future upgrades.

- Regarding the Martinborough Wastewater land spraying:
  1. How many hectares are to be sprayed for the new area?
     We estimate that 38 of the 46 hectares irrigation areas is needed to be irrigated by 2060.

  2. What type of disposal mechanisms will be used?
     To be confirmed. Effects have been assessed on basis of above ground spray irrigators.

- The streams are running close to the area and the paper say they were of “no ecological value (see attached Fig: 1)

  1. How was this assessed?
     Assessed by Dr Vaughan Keesing a freshwater ecologist - refer to technical report 3.3 for details of methodology used (which is consistent to the Environmental Impact Assessment NZ guidelines).
  2. What mitigation is being remedied in the streams that are significantly polluted?
     Clarification received 24/09/26: How is the sprayed effluent going to be controlled so it does not enter these streams and aquifers?

     Treated wastewater is being discharged in a location that does not drain towards Kellys Stream (located south and east of the irrigation area).

The proposed irrigation method is to irrigate the treated wastewater at a rate where the water is generally held in the soil and nutrients taken up by grass. The controls to ensure this outcome are specified in the proposed conditions of consent (refer Appendix 2.6):

1. Discharge when soil conditions are suitable, i.e. soil is able to absorb water. Soil moisture will be monitored to ensure that discharged water can be generally held in the soil
2. Rate of discharge rate is controlled
3. Frequency of discharge is controlled
4. Droplet size from irrigators is specified
5. Don't irrigate when it is raining

Should there be any excess irrigated water it will move down through the soil (being cleaned as it goes) and will be collected by drains under the turf and carried to soakage basins. These basins further clean the treated water and allow evaporation and soakage of remaining cleaned water to ground. Appropriate checking and repairs of the tile drains will be done to make sure that they work well, a new tile drain is also to be installed in the northern section of the site.

With the existing underlying clay pan in the soil profile, the treated wastewater will not enter groundwater. We will monitor water volume and quality collected by the drains and the performance of the soakage basins. This data will allow us to modify how much and when we discharge treated wastewater to optimise land treatment at the site, and to make sure things are working as they should be.

Hydrology- groundwater – no interaction due to loess/claypan and tile drains. Refer Section 7.4 of Volume 2: Supporting Information and Assessment of Effects on the Environment. And Technical Assessment 3.2.

Hydrology – watercourses – No drainage toward Kellys Stream, no measurable effect on other streams. Refer section 7.4 of Volume 2: Supporting information and Assessment of Effects on the Environment. And Technical Assessment 3.2

MWWTP Stage 2 Improvements RMA - OneDrive

3. How can the runoff be stopped going into the stream as in the attached Fig: 7.2 picture?

   Irrigated area drains away from the stream. Irrigation is at a rate that means water is generally held in the soil, so no runoff occurs.

4. On what criteria did the Council decide the surrounding streams were of no ecological value?
   Refer assessment by Dr Vaughan Keesing - Technical Report 3.3 for details of criteria used and outcome.

- There have been three severe weather storms that have closed the bridge in the last year.
  1. How is the Council going to ensure that the effluent will not affect surrounding area.

The irrigation area is generally located outside of floodplain. If the area floods, then any residual treated effluent will be diluted to a minute value.

2. Notable the Historical site close to the northern boundary?
   We are aware of this historical site, refer Technical Assessment 3.6.

Figures 1 / 2 referenced in this query:



Figure 1: Proposed irrigation location from MWWTP

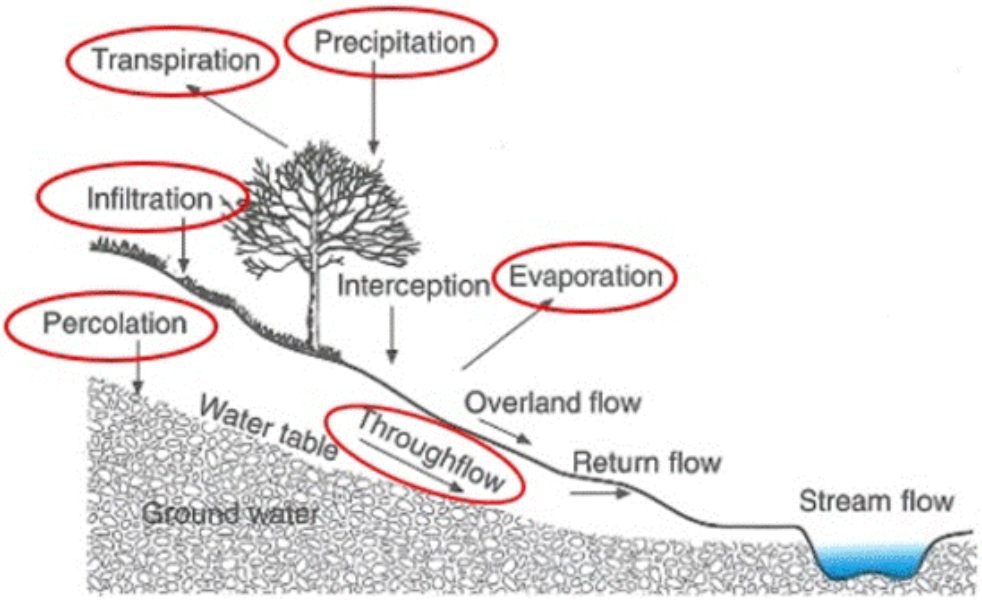


Figure 7.2: Elements of the hydrological cycle potentially affected by the spray irrigation of wastewater (After McConchie, 2001).

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. If this request is selected it will be published at https://swdc.govt.nz/lgoima-proactive-release/, with your personal information removed.

You have a right to request a review by the Ombudsman on this response. Further information about this process can be found on https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/what-ombudsman-can-help/complaints-about-government-agencies/how-make-complaint or email info@ombudsman.parliament.nz

Nāku noa, nā



James O'Connor
Group Manager, Infrastructure and Community Operations

Cc: Mayor Fran Wilde